

IN THE CLAIMS

Amend Claims 1, 3, 4, 5, 7-9, 11-16, 18-21, 23-27, 30 and 32-36 as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material having elastic properties aligned in one direction, ~~eonsisting of~~ comprising:

either one multilayer composite including at least one layer in which fibers or filaments made of an elastic polymer are contained,

or of a homogeneous fiber and filament mix in which a portion of the fibers ~~eonsists~~ is composed of an elastic polymer,

wherein each case a larger part of the fibers or filaments is aligned in a direction under the application of heat which extends transversely to the direction in which the nonwoven material is elastic.

2. (Original) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 1, wherein the multilayer composite contains elastic meltblown fibers and spunbond fibers.

3. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with ~~claim either of claims 1 or 2~~, wherein the elastic meltdown fibers contain bicomponent fibers having an elastic portion.

4. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with ~~claim either of claims 1 or 3~~, wherein the spunbound fibers are not elastic.

5. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 1, wherein the homogeneous fiber mix ~~eonsists~~ is composed of a needle felt and/or a spunlaced product to which elastic fibers have been added.

6. (Original) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 1, wherein a homogeneous fiber mix of a needle felt and/or a spunlaced product is combined with at least one layer of elastic meltdown fibers and/or spunbound fibers.

7. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 1 any ~~of the previous claims~~, wherein the needle felt and the spunlaced product also include viscose or natural fibers such as cellulose in addition to synthetic fibers.

8. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim either ~~of claims 1 or 4~~, wherein one or more meltdown layers (M) are arranged between one or more spunbound layers (S), such as in the order SM, SMS, SMMS, SSMMS, SSMMSS, with the elastomeric layers being contained at least in one meltdown layer.

9. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any ~~one of claims 1 or 8~~, wherein the elastic nonwoven layer is a liquid barrier layer or a particle retention layer.

10. (Original) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 9, wherein the property as a liquid barrier layer or a particle retention layer also remains maintained after drawing or stretching the nonwoven material.

11. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any ~~of claims 1 or 10~~, wherein the product stretchability amounts to 0-700%, preferably to 50-400%.

12. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any ~~of claims 1 or 11~~, wherein the recovery (recovery property) of the product amounts to at least 60%, preferably to at least 80%, on a two-fold stretching by 100%.

13. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any
~~of claims 1 to 11~~, wherein the recovery (contracting property) of the product
amounts to at least 50%, preferably to at least 70%, on a two fold stretching by
150%.

14. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any
~~of claims 1 or 13~~, wherein it is breathable.

15. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any
~~of claims 1 or 14~~, wherein it is hydrophilic.

16. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any
~~of claims 1 or 15~~, wherein a polymer having elastic properties is used as the
meltdown fiber and having similar flow properties (with respect to the rheological
and viscosity properties) as polypropylene.

17. (Original) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 16, wherein it
can be manufactured in an industrial production plant with high productivity.

18. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 17,
wherein the meltdown fibers ~~consists~~ are composed of the following mixture: more
than 60% by weight of a triblock copolymer consisting of 70% by weight of styrene-
ethylene/butylene-styrene and 30% by weight of styrene-ethylene/butylene-styrene,
where the polystyrene portion of the polymer is 14% by weight (e.g. Kraton G®), 5-
35% by weight of polypropylene suitable for processing in the meltblown method
and an anti-blocking agent to improve the flow properties.

19. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 18, wherein the meltblown fibers ~~e~~consists are composed of an elastic polyolefine, for example of a metallocene-catalyzed copolymer of the polyethylene and/or polypropylene.

20. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 18, wherein the meltdown fibers ~~e~~consists is composed of a thermoplastic elastic polyurethane.

21. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim any of claims 1 or 15, wherein, with a multilayer design, in addition to at least one meltblown layer having elastic fibers, spunbond layers made of one of the following materials are present: of polyolefine or polyester, or bicomponent polymer based on polypropylene and polyethylene, or of a polypropylene or polyester mixed with a bicomponent polypropylene/polyethylene or of an elastic polymer such as polyurethane, polystyrene block copolymer or an elastic polypropylene and/or polypropylene.

22. (Original) A nonwoven material in accordance with claim 21, wherein the spunbond layers and/or meltblown layers have a different design.

23. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with any of claim 1 to 22, wherein the layers of the multilayer design are bonded to one another by needlepunching, spunlacing, by thermobonding, by calendering with smooth rolls and/or engraved rolls and/or and/or by infrared bonding.

24. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the basis weight of the multilayer design amounts to 7 g/m² up to 400 g/m², where the elastic meltdown layers amount to 1 to 60% by weight.

25. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the basis weight of the needle nonwoven/spunlaced product or needle nonwoven together with elastic meltblown layers amounts to 40-700 g/m², where the elastic meltblown layers amount to 1 to 60% by weight.

26. (Currently amended) A nonwoven material in accordance with ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the meltblown layer provided with elastic properties has a fiber thickness of 0.01 to 1.2 denier, preferably 0.01 to 0.5 denier.

27. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a nonwoven material in accordance with ~~any of claims~~ claim 1 to 26, characterized in that the prefabricated nonwoven material web is drawn either in the running direction or transversely to the running direction for the aligning of the fibers/filaments under the application of heat.

28. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 27, wherein the transport speed in the longitudinal direction, measured in %, is lowered by more than the width increase in % to generate the elastic properties of the nonwoven material in the longitudinal direction and the increase of the basis weight belonging thereto.

29. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 27, wherein the width restriction, measured in %, is higher than the increase of the transport speed in the longitudinal direction, measured in %, to generate elastic properties of the nonwoven material in the transverse direction and the increase of the basis weight belonging thereto.

30. (Currently amended) An apparatus for the carrying out of the method in accordance with ~~claim 1 any of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that it has an oven and at least one drawing device to draw the nonwoven material web.

31. (Original) An apparatus in accordance with claim 30, wherein the drawing device to draw the nonwoven material web in the direction transverse to its transport direction has two wheel-shaped gripping apparatuses arranged to the side of the nonwoven material web and having receiving regions arranged at its periphery to grip the nonwoven material web.

32. (Currently amended) An apparatus in accordance with ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the drawing device to draw the nonwoven material web in the direction longitudinal to its transport direction ~~consists is composed~~ of at least two rolls via which the nonwoven material web is fixed by friction, wherein it is pulled at a speed higher in comparison with the entry speed of the nonwoven material web into the oven so that the nonwoven material web is drawn in the longitudinal direction.

33. (Currently amended) An apparatus in accordance with claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~, wherein the drawing device to draw the nonwoven material web in the direction longitudinal to its transport direction ~~consists~~ is composed of at least two oppositely disposed rolls between which the nonwoven material web is clamped and which are derivable at a higher peripheral speed than entry speed of the nonwoven material web into the oven so that the drawing of the nonwoven material web in the longitudinal direction takes place.

34. (Currently amended) An apparatus in accordance with claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~, wherein a temperature is set in the oven between the softening point and the melting point of the respectively processed thermoplastic fibers.

35. (Currently amended) An apparatus in accordance with claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~, wherein the drawing/pulling speed of the nonwoven material web amounts to 5-150 m/min, preferably to 40-100 m/min, on the drawing into the width.

36. (Currently amended) An apparatus in accordance with claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~, wherein the processing speed of the nonwoven material web amounts to 5-400 m/min, preferably to 80-250 m/min, on the drawing in the longitudinal direction.